

# Revising Utah's 2009 Economic Performance

*Why revise data? Monthly snapshots aren't fully developed.*


**I**t is common for government-generated statistics to be changed, or “revised,” after an original data profile had been released. This occurs because most government statistical data generated on a monthly basis are mere samples or snapshots of a larger pool of data that needs additional time to more fully develop.

One of these statistics is the employment profile of Utah. On a monthly basis, the Utah Department of Workforce Services prepares a report highlighting Utah's previous month's profile of employment gains or losses. These counts are generated by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), but BLS prefers that the individual states release and explain that data for them.

Yet it is only survey data. There is a richer set of Utah employment data that will appear months later via each state's unemployment insurance program. That count is so comprehensive it is actually called a Quarterly

Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)—not a survey, but a census.

In most years, the revisions between the original survey estimates and these later census counts are minimal, but not in the wild and woolly recession year of 2009. The survey is commended for capturing the steep employment downturn when it began in late 2008, but it came up short in ultimately measuring the depth of Utah's job loss. Whereas the survey had originally measured Utah's 12-month job loss for August 2009 at -4.5 percent, the QCEW data later showed that same loss to be -5.8 percent. That is a difference of an additional 26,000 lost jobs—no small potatoes at that.

None of this ultimately changes the 2009 Utah economic performance. It did what it did whether it was originally measured properly or not. What the change does is allow us to accurately understand and record Utah's 2009 economic performance. 

More recent employment data shows a greater job loss than originally calculated in 2009.

